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NOTES AND COMMENTS

THINKING BEYOND DIRECT VIOLENCE

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The thought-provoking roundtable on "theorizing violence" in the November 2013 issue of *IJMES* paid much attention to different manifestations of physical violence. This is the type of violence that as early as 1969 Johan Galtung, one of the founders of the field of peace studies, termed direct violence, distinguishing it from other forms of violence, to which I will refer below. Direct violence, Galtung noted, is related to "*somatic* incapacitation, or deprivation of health, alone (with killing as the extreme form), at the hands of an *actor* who *intends* this to be the consequence."[1] According to Galtung, direct violence is physically manifested, it is related to a discernible event, and it has to involve a perpetrator and a purpose.

With few exceptions, the participants in the roundtable wrote about variants of this kind of violence. Laleh Khalili, for example, writes, "for me, violence as a field of study encompasses the strategic choices of oppositional movements (guerilla warfare, violent revolutionary action, anticolonial warfare, etc.) as well as, and perhaps especially, the violence wielded by states and empires" (p. 791). Similarly, Daniel Neep writes about organized state violence, and while he argues that there is a need to explore war and state formation by incorporating culture into the analysis of violence, his prime interest is physical violence perpetrated by agencies of the state against its population. Likewise, Veena Das begins by posing the question of "what counts as 'violence' and how it is acknowledged" (p. 798). In her piece, she focuses on the relation between sexual violence as an aspect of dramatic and spectacular violence (wars, pogroms, etc.) and everyday forms of sexual violence in the public or domestic domains. And Faisal Devji begins his essay with a remark that violence has an "all-encompassing character which can now name almost any kind of *action* or *affect*: physical, psychological and even ideological [my emphasis]" (p. 801). His own work, indeed, is focused on the *actions* and the *affects* of al-Qaʿida's militancy and mostly its physical expressions.

To be sure, it is tempting and perhaps natural to study direct, physical violence. It is easy to see it, to collect data on it, to know who the perpetrator is, and to discern cause and effect. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to study this form of violence because of its devastating outcomes. However, Galtung and many other peace researchers have diligently worked to extend the meanings of violence beyond the physical and observable. "Violence," Galtung wrote in his 1969 seminal article, "is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations." According to this definition, violence does not have to be expressed physically or directly, and it may occur without an actor and without its intended consequences. Galtung termed this *structural* or *indirect* violence because it

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"is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances." One of his most famous examples of the difference between direct and indirect violence is the following: "when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when [one] million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence." Direct violence, thus, shows. Structural violence, on the other hand, is silent. "It is essentially static, it *is* the tranquil waters. In a *static* society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us."

Later in his career, Galtung expanded his categorization of violence to include cultural violence, which he defined as "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence." He thus conceived a "violence triangle" and suggested that there may be a connecting flow from cultural to structural to direct violence.[2] Many scholars followed him and developed an extensive body of literature that builds on these definitions, at times arguing about them,[3] but mostly expanding them to the point that the terms direct, structural, and cultural violence have become an inseparable part of the lexicon of the multidisciplinary field of peace research.

Given that structural violence is mostly related to unequal power dynamics, scholars of the Global South have tended to find much use for the term as a theoretical lens for their analysis. A notable example is the medical anthropologist, Paul Fulmer, who analyzed the extreme forms of pain and impoverishment in Haiti (prior to the 2010 earthquake) as a form of structural violence. Writing about two Haitians who lived (and died) in one of the poorest locales on earth, he argued that their "suffering is structured by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire—whether through routine, ritual . . . to constrain agency." Fulmer maintained that for many, including most of his patients and informants, "life choices are structured by racism, sexism, political violence *and* grinding poverty."[4]

It is, perhaps, not surprising that gender scholars would pay close attention to structural violence.[5] After all, gender inequalities are ubiquitous and one does not need to live in the Global South to experience gendered structural violence. Indeed, of the participants in the roundtable, Yeşim Arat is the only one who directly engages with structural violence, by elaborating on the development of the concept of intersectionality: the intersections and conversions of structural inequalities in cases of race, class, religion, nationality, and gender. Her piece demonstrates that cutting-edge scholarship continues to expand the meanings and manifestations of violence. She also demonstrates how direct violence, in the shape of a government crackdown on peaceful protestors in Taksim Square, can be analyzed through a different prism that ties social structures, or intersectionality, with visible violence.

Violence continues to be reconceptualized and theorized. Recently, Rob Nixon, the literary scholar, coined the term "slow violence" to denote the process of the environmental catastrophes in the Global South caused mostly by the industrialized Global North. It is a violence, he wrote, "that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."[6] Building on the concept of structural violence as defined by Galtung, he took it one step further, challenging the Norwegian scholar

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for seeing it as static and timeless. For Nixon, the concept of slow violence highlights the temporal dimensions of structural violence. Time, particularly in environmental disasters, becomes an "actor." We need, Nixon argued, to

> complicate conventional assumptions about violence as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is event focused, time bound, and body bound. We need to account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions—from domestic abuse to posttraumatic stress and, in particular, environmental calamities.[7]

So what can we, scholars of the Middle East, take from this very brief and—given space constraints—superficial exposition of different forms of violence, all of which have been studied extensively in other areas and fields of study?[8] First, perhaps we can expand our own work and also study forms of violence that go beyond the suicide bomber, the police state, the physical occupation of this or that land. The Middle East could serve as a fertile laboratory of structural and cultural forms of violence both for the study of domestic issues (gender inequalities, socioeconomic tensions, sectarianism, local environmental disasters, etc.) and for the study of international and global issues (neoliberalism and its influence on the region, international power dynamics, Orientalism as a form of cultural violence, etc.). All of these topics have already been studied extensively by scholars of the Middle East, but exploring them through the lens of violence could shed fresh and new light on them. Second, at times what constitutes direct violence could be analyzed through its structural manifestations. For example, in her short and smart book, *Occupied with Nonviolence*, Jean Zaru has shown how the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories should also be understood via the prism of structural violence.[9] And in the roundtable, Banu Bargu, who is interested in the *actions* of suicide bombers, argues that to study the root causes of direct violence we first need to understand "the current political landscape, its underlying structures of inequality, the institutions and agents that occupy it and their unequal relations of power" (p. 805).

In conclusion, scholars of the Middle East, myself included, should pay closer attention to conversations about violence that occur outside of our field. This could contribute to external literature on violence as well as to our own field and, perhaps even better, blur the artificial distinction between different areas of study. As demonstrated by some of the participants in this roundtable, it is already happening in the margins of the "guild." It should be mainstreamed.

NOTES

Author's note: My thanks to the *IJMES* editors, whose comments on this piece helped me sharpen my arguments.

[1]Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (1969): 168. Emphasis in original text.

[2]Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1990): 291–305.

[3]Kenneth Boulding, "Twelve Friendly Quarrels with Johan Galtung," *Journal of Peace Research* 14 (1977): 75–86.

[4]Paul Farmer, "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below," *Daedalus* 125 (Winter 1996): 263. See also idem, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence" and "Structural Violence and Clinical

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Medicine," in *Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader,* ed. Haun Saussy (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2010).

[5]See, for example, David Ghanim, *Gender and Violence in the Middle East* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009).

[6]Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

[7]Ibid., 3.

[8]See, for example, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992); Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1998); Phillipe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mary Ann Tetreault et al., eds., *Rethinking Global Political Economy: Emerging Essays, Unfolding Odysseys* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010).

[9]Jean Zaru, *Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2008).

A COMMENT ON MORIEL RAM'S REVIEW OF AVI RAZ, *THE BRIDE AND THE DOWRY: ISRAEL, JORDAN, AND THE PALESTINIANS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE JUNE 1967 WAR* (*IJMES* 45 [2013]: 629–31)

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In his review of my book, *The Bride and the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians in the Aftermath of the June 1967 War*, Moriel Ram offers praise and criticism. At the risk of sounding ungrateful for the praise, I find his review to be based on careless reading and thus unfounded, thereby doing disservice to readers of *IJMES*.

A glaring example is offered by the opening sentence of the review, in which Ram states that I primarily focus "on the *negotiations* between Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians" [my emphasis]. But there were no negotiations during the period covered by my book. My underlying argument is that Israel, unwilling to relinquish its war acquisitions, deliberately avoided negotiations with King Husayn and the West Bank leadership, both of whom were eager to reach a peaceful settlement with the Jewish state. Instead, Israel maintained futile contacts with the former and a one-way dialogue with the latter. Ram nevertheless continually invokes the term "negotiations" throughout the review. At one point he remarkably volunteers his own speculative explanation for the "Israeli refusal to expose its opening position in any of the negotiations." If Israel refused to expose its opening position, what was there to negotiate about?

Another striking example is Ram's treatment of my discussion of Israel's so-called "generous peace offer" of 19 June 1967. According to Ram, on that day Israel proposed to cede most of the territories it had occupied in the war, but the "analytical depth . . . in regards to the attention allocated to the intricate details" is insufficient. "Attention" is indeed the key word here. Had Ram paid adequate attention to the detailed discussion of the subject in the book (pp. 43–47), he would have learned that the "offer" was nothing but a diplomatic maneuver to win over the United States, and was never meant to reach

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